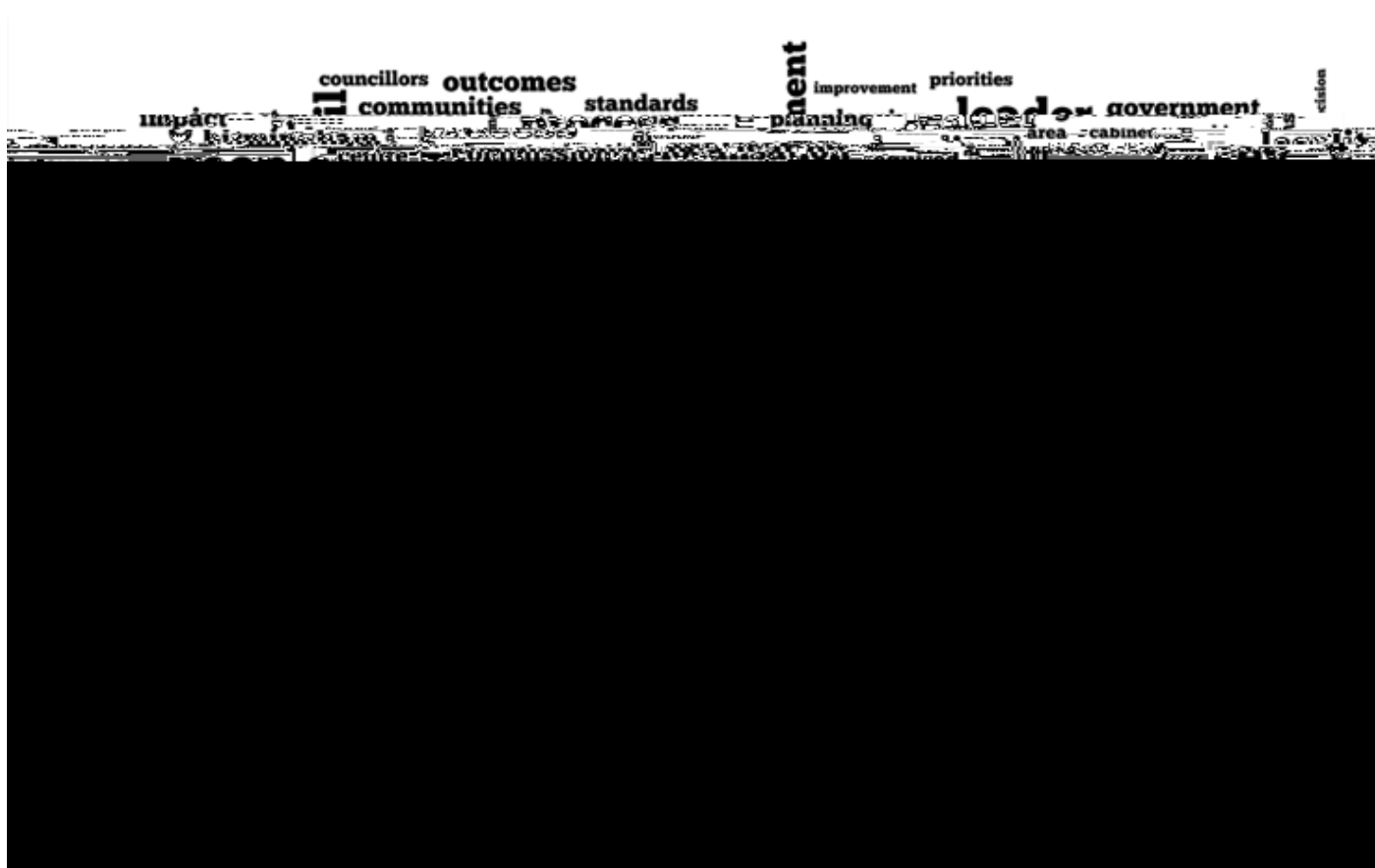


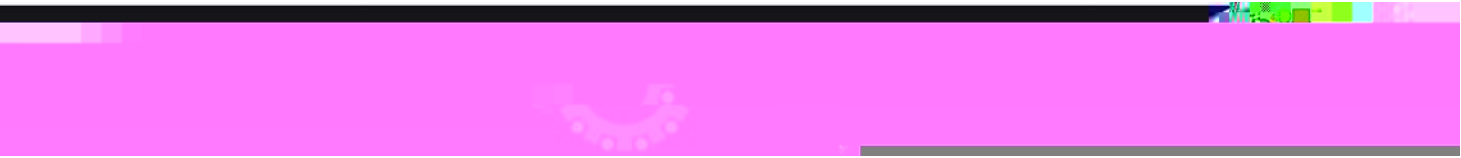
# Devolution: Making it Real



A report from Overview & Scrutiny







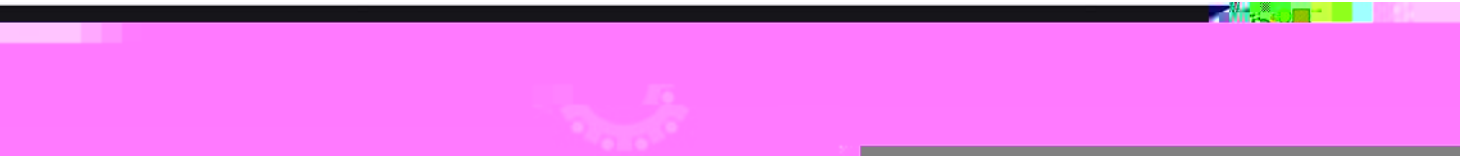


# Devolution: Making it Real

Further information regarding this report can be obtained from:

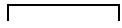
Lead Review Officer: Benita Wishart

tel: 0121464 6871





## Summary of Recommendations



Recommendation

Responsibility

Completion Date

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R05</b>	The Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement to agree with Executive Members for Local Services where each client function sits to ensure it is best able to monitor and manage the impact and delivery on the locality.	Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement and Executive Members for Local Services	To be in place by March 2014
<b>R06</b>	<p>The Leader in collaboration with Executive Members for Local Services to carry out an early review of the protocol within the Meeting Arrangements for District Committees (30 July 2012) and associated frameworks to ensure they reflect the differential requirement of place enabling districts to adapt and work in different ways to reflect the diversity of place and people.</p> <p>Ensures that any future protocols and strategic frameworks provide enough flexibility to reflect the differential requirements of place.</p>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>March 2013</p> <p>This is an ongoing measure against which the Committee will benchmark and measure ongoing performance and changing culture.</p>

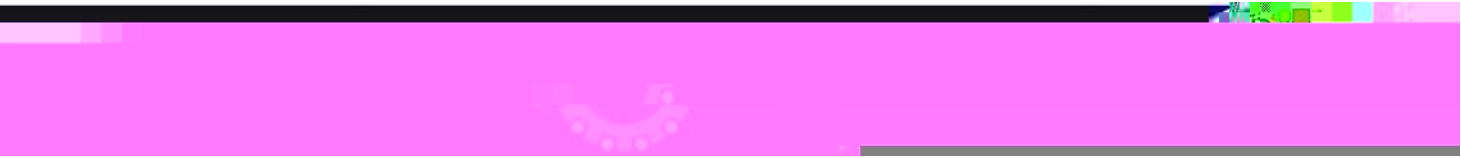
**R07** In order to ensure that structures are fit to deliver excellent services, with services being located in the right place (whether that be within districts, Local Services Directorate or the other directorates) the Leader to work with the Executive and Executive Members for Local Services in partnership to develop a rigorous functional re-alignment test for services to be devolved.



# Devolution: Making it Real

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R08	<p>That the Leader works with officers to develop ward champions at JNC and Grade 7 level (excluding Service Integration Heads) to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add management support into wards and constituencies;</li> <li>Help wards avoid and navigate blockages and identify opportunities and ensure wards are better able to feed into the development of strategy; and</li> <li>Ensure that directorates have a mechanism for better understanding of local issues.</li> </ol> <p>This should be embedded through performance and development reviews (PDRs) and a six monthly seminar with the Chief Executive to identify common issues and trends.</p>	Leader	April 2013
R09	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to improve information and knowledge flows, ensuring ward and district information can be shared with the corporate centre and the centre provides appropriate information broken down to localities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a "whole system whole place approach" with a common vision and clarity about decision-making;</li> <li>Developing an information platform to ensure better sharing of and access to data; and</li> <li>Investigating opportunities to share data with key stakeholders – building on community based budgeting and total place pilots.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>Action plan April 2013</p> <p>Implementation April 2014</p>
R10	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to ensure learning is embedded within the devolution process through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a learning and development plan for devolution. This should provide opportunities for Members and officers to learn, innovate, positively accept the risks that are intrinsic to innovation, and challenge and draw upon Birmingham's Public Service Academy; and</li> <li>Ensuring the reflections of previous scrutiny reports inform the recommendations as set out in this</li> </ul>	Leader, Executive Members for Local Services and Chair of Governance, Resources and Member Development.	<p>Progress report April 2013</p> <p>This is an ongoing measure against which the Committee will benchmark and measure ongoing performance and changing culture.</p>

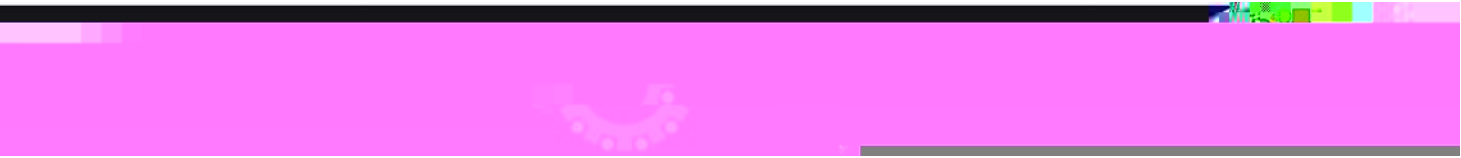






# Devolution: Making it Real

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R15	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to develop the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standards to include the meeting of statutory requirements such as health and safety standards and a citizen entitlement to universal services such as refuse collection and street cleansing.</li> <li>• Core standards need to relate to 'outcomes', where possible, as the offer or 'inputs' then should differ according to the needs and requirements of a locality. E.g. the characteristics of a built environment impact on cleansing and the characteristics of local worklessness and health inequalities will require different interventions.</li> </ul> <p>In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop differential locality standards (reflecting the specific needs of people and place) can be set by districts – to meet local priorities within available resources.</li> <li>• To develop an agreed city-wide civic entitlement setting out a minimum level of access to city-wide provision within available resources.</li> </ul>	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	<p>April 2013</p> <p>To be incorporated into the district planning process</p> <p>Subject to annual review</p> <p>Committee will require regular reports on this.</p>
R16	<p>Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities to:</p> <p>a) Develop opportunities for citizens to shape service delivery: Work with ward committees, Local Services Directorate and the corporate centre to develop citizen engagement opportunities, making the best use of existing networks (including natural community hubs e.g. school gates, local markets and places of worship), the City Council's own website and other websites and social media (within available resources) and encourage the development of improvement plans where necessary and ensure engagement outcomes feed into annual district governance reviews.</p> <p>b) Develop Partnership engagement as part of delivering "different for less": Map current partnerships and stakeholders, reflecting which are fit for purpose, and agree principles for partnership working. We would</p>	Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities	<p>May 2013</p> <p>To be available for every district planning cycle.</p>





## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Devolution

1.1.1 In May 2012 the Labour administration gained control of the Council with a commitment to see through the approach to localisation and devolution started a decade earlier. To facilitate that a “big bang” approach was taken with constitutional and some structural changes in place by July. There are many challenges facing devolution, many of which have been in place for some time. Some, such as public sector cuts are new.

1.1.2 Whilst the environment for devolution is very different to a decade ago, as then, a key determinant is that Birmingham is too big and too complex to manage at a single tier.

### 1.2 Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.2.1 The Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee chose to focus its first

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Birmingham Context


2.1.1 Devolution and Localisation has a long history in Birmingham, going back to the development of ward committees, ward advisory boards and neighbourhood forums and the Local Involvement Local Action programme of the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Arguably the debate began even earlier with Sir Richard Knowles' enthusiasm for parishing the city in the 1980s. There has long been a widespread feeling that the city and the City Council is too large to be managed as a single entity and that services have been too centralised to respond to local needs and preferences or to engage communities and individuals effectively in decision making. The key local and national policy influences upon devolution and localisation can be seen to be:

- The Democracy Commission - chaired by Sir Adrian Cadbury and originally intended to provide a response to the Local Government Act 2000, the Commission rapidly came to the conclusion that the City Council was too remote and unresponsive and that it should "devolve decisions wherever possible to the local level".
- The Green Paper: A New Partnership for Governance. This was the City Council's first attempt to consult on how to move forward with further devolution and to respond to the Commission. The paper proposed a framework of Ward Strategic Partnerships to replace ward committees, with constituency level localisation of specific services overseen by occasional meetings of all the ward partnerships. It also proposed strengthening the role of neighbourhood forums and investing in the capacity of communities through Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.
- The "Highbury 3" conference of February 2001. The conference established the theme of "flourishing neighbourhoods" which would be taken forward within the Going Local programme.
- The Constitutional Convention and Declaration of Intent, December 2001. Following the green paper consultation there remained uncertainty about the structure for devolution to constituency or ward levels and a tension between the political focus of the wards and the practicalities of service localisation. The idea of the convention was to bring together the key stakeholders, including a range of political parties, community groups, the voluntary sector and public services. The Convention crafted a Declaration which set out the framework of constituency committees and partnerships, but maintained the consultative role for ward committees and referenced the importance of neighbourhood renewal.
- The process of policy development was overseen by a Cabinet Committee chaired by the Leader of the Council. An officer led working group undertook a detailed analysis of services to

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<sup>1</sup> We have drawn heavily upon a paper provided by Tony Smith, Senior Policy Officer





the need to support contributions “from the bottom up”, amongst council employees, local communities, voluntary organisations, other agencies and local councillors, means that change will occur in a non-linear way and according to a number of different drivers. Above all this must be seen as a process of cultural change, rather than one which is dominated by the planning of new structures of management and accountability.

2.2.3 And this quote from the November 2002 Council report could easily support wider considerations within the current context:

“The proposals set out in this report are part of a wider transformation taking place in the role and structure of local government, which will see all services operating in a more locally focused and joined-up way. For example, the Social Services Department is establishing closer links and joint commissioning with the NHS and its operations will be increasingly aligned with the devolved NHS management through Primary Care Trusts. The City Council, through its Overview and Scrutiny Committees, will also shortly be taking on a formal scrutiny role in relation to local NHS services. Schools have operated under local management for more than a decade. The next stage in the evolution of education services will see the development of “extended schools” which bring together a variety of family and community services, such as child care, study support, health and social services (delivered through multi-agency teams), adult education and family learning, sports, leisure and arts facilities.”

2.2.4 In addition to the housing reforms included in the 2003 proposals, two other service areas were also taken out of the process at an earlier stage. These were:

- Local development control - where the professional drive to retain a centralised system on the grounds of consistency and equity can conflict with the clear local interest in engagement and a new context of neighbourhood planning; and
- The youth service.

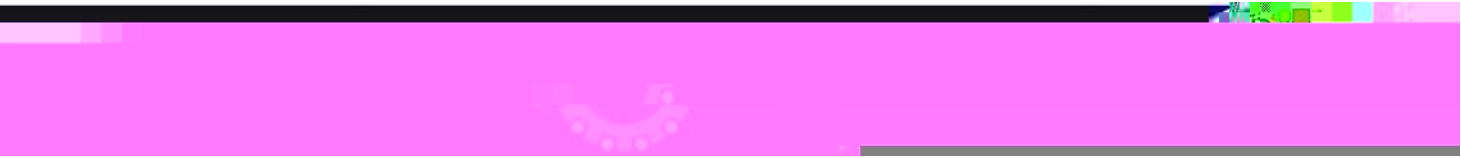
2.2.5 As one of the witnesses to our inquiry suggested *“it’s been a bit of a muddled journey.”*

2.2.6 To govern a city successfully it is necessary to set out a clear



# Devolution: Making it Real







localisation. The scrutiny report<sup>3</sup> in 2010 responding to the Future Shape of Localisation consultation set out five principles for achieving excellence. We suggest they are still relevant today. They related to:

- Local councillors being able to control, not just influence services;
- Budget savings should not be at the expense of local decision making as efficiencies can be made locally;
- The Total Place / Community based budgeting approach can help the wider public sector use budgets better;
- Local engagement is important and welcomed where residents can see the impact and feel valued; and
- District Committees are a good size for enabling local partnership working.

2.3.9 It also called for a review of governance, in term of number and purpose of meetings and who is engaged, which is still outstanding.

## 2.4 Definitions

### What is Devolution? A Perspective from the Chamberlain Forum

The word is derived from 'devolutus' the past participle of the Latin verb 'devolvere' meaning 'to roll down'.

In practice, devolution is an approach to enabling systems intelligence by increasing the number of decision making points within it on a geographic basis. It is the opposite to centralisation (reducing the number of decision points) and professional specialisation (organising decisions according to skills needed to address them, rather than to geography). Devolution is not the same as:

- Delegation – which is about assigning authority and responsibility to another to carry out specific tasks or functions within set parameters.
- Differentiation – which is about creating advantage through variety and distinctiveness in what you produce.
- Divestment – which is about letting go of assets and functions and the responsibility for them.
- Diversification – which is about doing new things in new ways.

Though, in time, it might lead to or involve all four of the above.

Devolution, however, is not - and is not intended to lead to:

- Disintegration – which is about breaking something up into independent pieces.

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<sup>3</sup> Local Services and Community Safety O&S Committee (November 2010) *Localisation: Response to the Consultation on the Future Shape of Localisation 2010*.

## 2.5 The 2012 Vision

2.5.1 The Leader's Statement<sup>4</sup> of June 2012 set out three key priorities going forward:

- Tackle inequality and deprivation;
- Laying the foundations of a prosperous city; and
- Involving people and communities in the future of their localities and public services. "A city with local services for local people."

2.5.2 Articulating his vision for localisation at full Council the Leader referred to:

"creating a city with local services that respond to the needs of local people – wherever they live in the city."

2.5.3 The statement also says "devolution and localisation is at the heart of our vision for Birmingham." He explained the different concepts as:

- Devolution is about the governance of functions and involves elected councillors; whilst
- Localisation focuses on the delivery of services and involves City Council officers.

2.5.4 The Leader, giving evidence, suggested that devolution gives councillors responsibility for their own area in a more tangible way than they can when services are delivered from the centre. This recognises that services should not be delivered in a homogenous way across Birmingham as the needs may be different. We know that one solution does not fit all and so, for a city of one million devolution makes sense.

2.5.5 It is very easy when discussing devolution to concentrate on structures and governance. But it is necessary to concentrate on the outcomes – what does it mean for citizens of our city? What is the impact on the services they want or need and the places in which they live, learn and play? Devolution needs to be about making places where people choose to carry out those activities and providing opportunities for them. An outcome of a ten district approach is that places will look different, and develop in different ways, prioritising different issues. At the same time, some common priorities are likely, such as strengthening the resilience of residents to the challenges ahead and helping people to help themselves.

2.5.6 In particular devolution can lead to promotion of well-being and the need to ensure opportunities for the "five ways" for residents to improve their well being through:

- Connection: with the people around them;
- Being active: keeping moving;
- Taking notice: environmental and emotional awareness;

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<sup>4</sup> Birmingham City Council , June 2012



# Devolution: Making it Real

- Keeping learning: trying something new at any age; and
- Giving: helping others and build reciprocity and trust.<sup>5</sup>

2.5.7 A set of outcomes the Districts and Public Engagement O&S Committee suggested were:

- Services being different, better suited to the area, and more efficient;
- Officers work for their locality first, not their service or directorate, and work together more;
- Local councillors can have more influence on the services that are delivered; and
- Residents believe they are more in control of their services and their local area.

2.5.8 Devolution in 2012 is part of a journey and the

2.5.12 The report sets out some requirements for action plans. Alongside setting out the vision it would be helpful to provide a 'road map' for transition, setting out the progressive steps to be taken over a longer, possibly four-year term, to get from where we are to where we want to go.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R01</b>	The Leader in association with Executive Members for Local Services to develop a common understanding of the purpose of devolution and the districts' contribution to the key priorities of the city and their locality.	Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	April 2013

## Place Shaping

2.5.13 People shape space to make place; and different places and people relate to different spatial scales, therefore there is not necessarily one correct spatial scale for a given policy intervention. There needs to be a place based focus, with some things delivered at a neighbourhood level, some at a ward, some at a district and others city-wide.

2.5.14 There needs to be a localised focus for developing place based strategies. The Leader's statement indicated that a new Neighbourhood Strategy will be developed to be:

"One of the most ambitious programmes for social cohesion and regenerat746 500.660



# Devolution: Making it Real

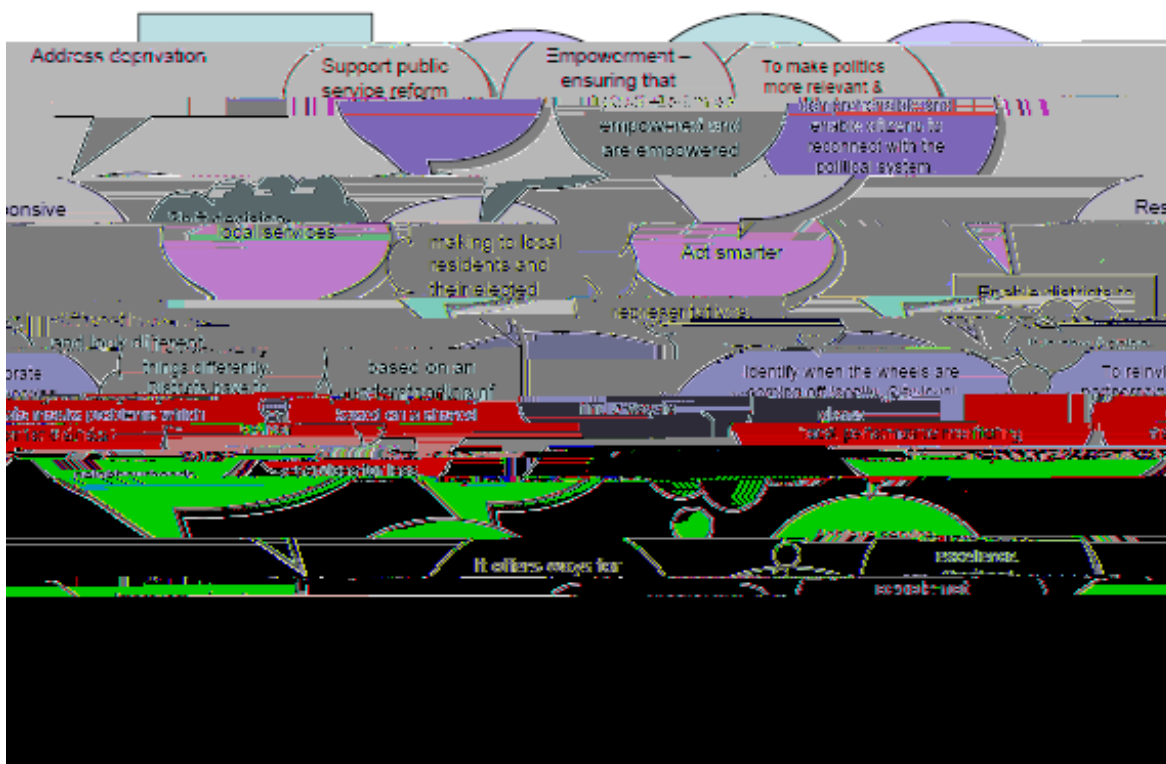
2.5.18 A recent commission into the future of local government concluded:

“Local government must seize the day!

Rather than waiting for central government to tell it what to do, now is the time for local government to seize the opportunity to shape its own future. The unequivocal message the Commission heard was that only local government has the mandate to lead cities and towns, and the public trust it to do so. Councils are becoming increasingly innovative and effective at producing good quality services and value for the taxpayer and they now need to look ahead positively. In planning ahead, local government must rediscover the spirit of the original civic entrepreneurs, such as Joseph Chamberlain.”<sup>6</sup>


2.5.19 We heard and suggested many aims for the devolution agenda – see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Reasons for Devolution



2.5.20 The message of this inquiry is that “districts must seize the day.” However, to enable this, an equally important message is that “the centre must let go.” This means to trust and empower districts, be confident in letting go, and willing for districts to experiment, take risks, be

<sup>6</sup> Leeds Commission into the Future of Local Government



entrepreneurial, learn from mistakes, and allow districts to evolve their own distinctive character and ways of working.

## 2.6 Big Bang and “How do you know when you’ve succeeded”?

- 2.6.1 When the Leader gave evidence he talked about the journey and the length of time it had taken to grow the devolution agenda. He suggested that devolution could not work until all the structures were put in place. This belief underpinned the decision to take a “Big Bang” approach and put the structures in place by the end of Summer 2012 to allow devolution to grow.
- 2.6.2 We were told that in order for others (residents, partners and officers) to understand and believe that real change was being made there was no choice other than the “Big Bang” and it was considered the right strategic approach for such a major transformation in the way our city is run. However, this is inevitably throwing up tensions which require resolving in the interim and reflect some of the ongoing anomalies from devolution over the past decade.
- 2.6.3 But it was suggested that success can not happen if the status quo continues:


“We can measure success when we cause interruptions and change the way we



# Devolution: Making it Real

- 2.6.6 A structure that is introduced not in the constitution but in one of the Cabinet reports is the quadrants covering two or three districts. We have clarified that the role of 'quadrants' is to provide an internal operational management arrangement, a shared-services facility to support the primary functions of district and neighbourhood services. There is little commonality or strategic intent between some districts within quadrants, but they do provide further opportunities for sharing staff which need to be considered due to the flexibility offered.
- 2.6.7 With this refreshed vision and a changing context it would be wrong to see devolution as a debate about structures and governance. Fundamentally, it relates to the reform of local government and public services in the 21st century. It is about creating conditions for leadership to make and shape sustainable inclusive places at a neighbourhoodket95Tw0 TD





and people ducking responsibility? The focus on the citizen experience could be captured in ways like:

- “Instead of services being like A, we get a better deal because they are now like B”
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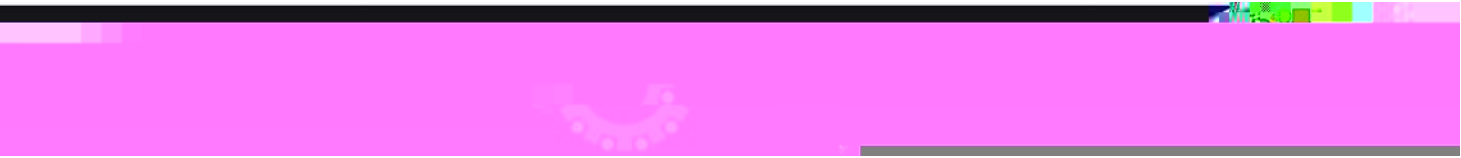
## 3 Transition Tensions

### 3.1 Challenges

- 3.1.1 Some challenges have been around for some time, such as the resource allocation to districts, and difficulties of making a surplus with the sports, leisure and culture services. Some are old challenges in a new context. For example, housing management still requires significant service improvement, regardless of the new structures now being put in place.
- 3.1.2 Other challenges include the slow speed of cultural change; assets (many of which are outdated, in the wrong place, with the wrong offer and with high upkeep costs); the inevitable tensions of a central / local split; complicated geographies; engagement and service delivery not being uniform across the city; plus challenges relating to specific services.
- 3.1.3 It would be inappropriate, however, to ignore the challenge of cynicism and disbelief, whether it be over a single issue or about the whole devolution agenda. The introduction of new policies have been marred by discussion of where meetings should be held. One person suggested that at both a national and local level devolution might just be *"a theoretical exercise for politicians to appear to be taking action without actually doing anything"* and that success might be measured by some as devolving accountability for cuts to districts, whilst retaining power centrally. Working with the cynics, and not merely dismissing their concerns will be necessary to really make this work. We need to be able to negotiate conflict.
- 3.1.4 Care, however, needs to be taken to ensure that devolution is not held responsible for failure to deliver change to services where change was unlikely to be achieved regardless of the delivery model.

### 3.2 District Planning Process

- 3.2.1 All districts are required to produce a district plan and these should be the bedrock of districts going forward. Currently there is a lack of understanding about what is required and what intelligence is required. The plans need to be able to articulate the differential requirement of place – to draw out the differences of places and the needs within them. They need to be robust enough to be able to be the basis of commissioning. It will be an iterative process as partnership capacity and relationships develop.
- 3.2.2 The plans should set out the distinctiveness of place including hard and soft data setting out the issues for the area, including analysis which pulls out key concerns and also captures the physical and institutional assets and the social capital of the area (an asset based approach).
- 3.2.3





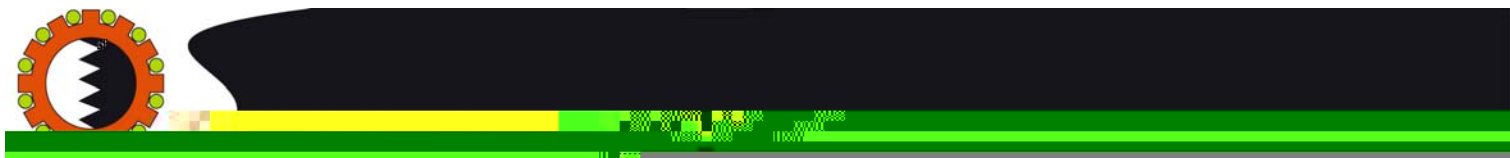
procurement process. There will be others where they may be able to influence, and some where the greatest impact is on the city as a whole and so district views may not be needed.

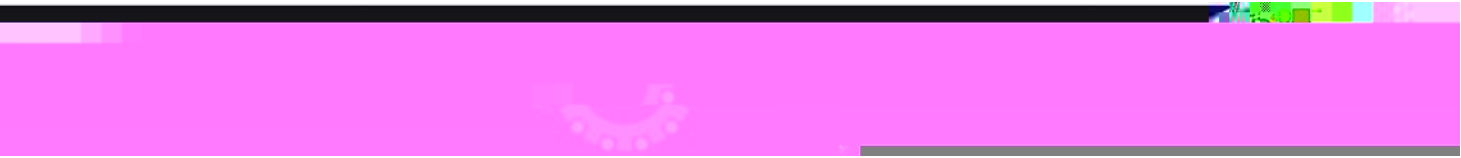
**Table 1: Procurement Roles**

<b>Districts Role in Procurement</b>	<b>Type of Service</b>
Control	Impact mainly upon locality and control of delivery
Strongly influence	Place assessed - Impact mainly upon locality but functional re-alignment determines it is not the responsibility of district
Marginal influence	Impact mainly on city – or people rather than place
Accept	Where impact greatest on city / region as a whole

3.3.2 There is agreement that procuring services ten times over would be costly, so for some services it will make sense to pursue collaborative engagement. The ability of districts to also be able to









# Devolution: Making it Real

To enable cross directorate understanding of the challenges in the city and help support the process the previous review *Resourcing Devolution* recommended developing ward champions. The principle of JNC ward champions has been agreed by the Strategic Director for Local Services, but further discussion about the role and capacity of those senior officers should be held.

Recommendation gn i d r . 4 3 Responsibility- t t e b Completion (Date) 3 0 0 . 5 em



notice alterations, changes to occupation and family makeup or identify additional needs. To make better use of this knowledge there needs to be:

- An expectation through the contracts of reporting back to the Council (issues of confidentiality can of course be discussed as relevant to a service). This can be incorporated into the Business Charter for Social Responsibility;
- An ability of officers to be able to handle that information; and
- An improved knowledge hub to make the data easier to capture, sitting on a smaller range of data platforms which interact with each other better.

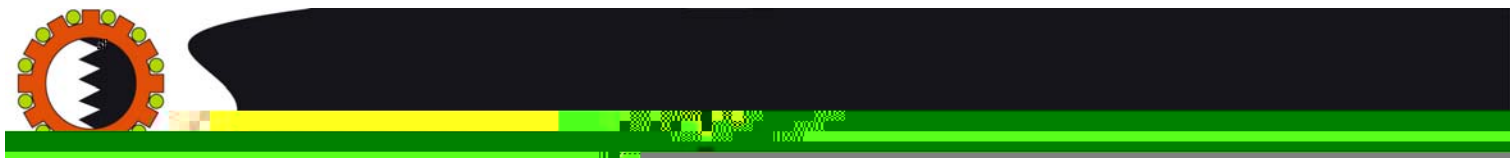
	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R09	<p>The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to improve information and information can be shared with the corporate information broken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a “whole system whole place approach” with clarity about decision-making;</li> <li>• Developing an information platform to data; and</li> <li>• Investigating opportunities to share data with key stakeholders – building on community based bulgeting and total place pilots.</li> </ul>	<p>Leader and Executive Members Services</p> <p>down to a common vision</p>	<p>Action plan April 2013 for localities</p>

### 3.7.1

devolution and localisation will require significant cultural change. This inquiry sought to unpack what officers, councillors and partners saw as the primary of that cultural change, as there is also a perception that cultural change had become the excuse for no change or past failure to deliver that change. Figure 3 sets out what we believe to be the key components of securing cultural change – commonality of purpose or coherence of vision is key and without that the system/process improvements will not be driven.

### 3.7.2

The changing context in terms of the drive for the uncertainties of the current resource and policy environment requires a whole system review. Tinkering at the edges will only add to the current complexity and lack of ownership and delivery of change. For example, the lack of transparency and basic sense in the districts does not incentivise ownership of change or performance improvement. Resources constraints and differential capacity in the districts needs



management programme in the priority areas was somewhat different to that and many wards contain two or three identifiable neighbourhoods. Lack of common language will undermine the development of coherent vision and ultimately lead to distrust and confusion where different parties believe they have signed up to the same outcome but individual interpretation means something quite different.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R10</b>	The Leader and Executive Members for Local Services to ensure learning is embedded within the devolution process through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>		



## Cuts

3.8.4 The national Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 signalled major public expenditure reductions for local government and district services are expected to deliver cumulative reductions of 28% by 2015/16 and it is likely that there will be a reduction of 48% of controllable budgets by 2016/17. This will present a major challenge and a drive for a need to deliver services differently.

## Budget Allocation

3.8.5 Budget setting is not fit for purpose. The district services budgets were originally allocated on the

standards. And then based on the evidenced locality needs. Alongside that resources may need to follow to meet any agreed city-wide standards based on accessibility rather than administrative boundaries.

3.8.9 Within this it is recommended that districts' budgets are revisited and constructed around:

- Costs of providing a service to agreed core and shared standards in each district;
- The evidence base of need and distinctiveness of an area; and
- Costs of running services which are historically situated in a district – general e.g. Neighbourhood Offices and unique e.g. Starchley Indoor Bows Centre, Alexander Stadium.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R11	The Leader to establish and work with a cross party councillor group (to include councillors representing inner and outer city wards)	The Leader	31.12.13



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- 3.8.12 Without accurate income and expenditure lines being in the budget, the budget itself can not be transparent and it can be a challenge to feel ownership of it. This needs to change as without accountability and transparency it will be difficult to make the step changes required to make it work this time.
- 3.8.13 An aim outlined in the Leader's evidence to Committee is that 80% of functions will be managed





# Devolution: Making it Real

3.9.3 One of the concerns about current services relates to how residents access services and assessments or make complaints when there has been service failure. There was some uncertainty as to how the front facing elements of services, including, but not only, the Customer First call centre have adapted to the devolution agenda.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>R14</b>	Executive Members for Local Services to work with the Deputy Leader to ensure that interface with citizens for service delivery (i.e. the first point of contact for a service) is fit for purpose, e.g. neighbourhood offices, call centre and web site, and reflect differential needs of people and place, taking into account the outcomes of the Governance, Resources and Member Development O&S customer services inquiry.	Deputy Leader and Executive Members for Local Services	Assessment of key changes required to deliver integrated local interface May 2013.  Cross cutting improvement plan – September 2013

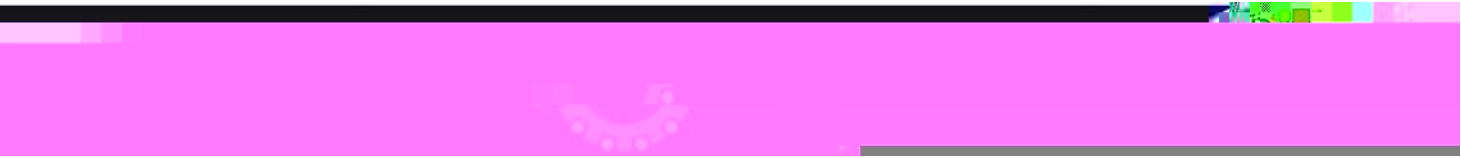
3.9.4 Agreeing standards provides transparency to the citizen and will aid budget allocation. The first element needs to be core standards which as a minimum include the requirements of statutory provision and health and safety. Above that they include the citizen entitlement to universal services such as street services and other key locality services.

3.9.5 In addition are differential locality standards set by districts to meet local priorities and reflect the specific needs of people and place. For example, relating to the local environment such as density and layout or relating to specific local pressures such as skills and worklessness and health inequalities. This is where local commissioning may help in bridging gaps.

3.9.6 One concern about devolution may be about different services standards across the city. It can be seen that the proposal is a shared expectation of many services whether someone lives in Kingstanding, Billesley or Lozells and East Handsworth with local differences then having been agreed in a transparent manner.

3.9.7 In addition, there is a need to develop an agreed city entitlement setting out a minimum level of city-wide provision, particularly as budgetary pressures grow. E.g. ensuring all citizens are within a 20 minute walk / bus ride of a library opening at least x hours a week. To do this a wide range of available data and expertise needs to be used.





Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
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3.10.7 Barriers to partnership included, of course the opposite of successful attributes, but also:

- Inflexibility of solutions – “our way or no way”;
- Previous failure to deliver or work in partnership;
- Bureaucracy getting in the way;
- An interest in protecting the status quo;
- Competition for resources working against sharing and collaboration; and
- Time and capacity of volunteers and officers.

3.10.8 Structures are only one element of partnership working, however, we consistently heard of the importance of developing relationships and that the more these were built upon trust and reciprocity the more robust they can become. Under the new approach to devolution the importance of partnerships was picked up in the district protocol with a suggestion of co-option onto the district committee of specific bodies. Given the complexity of partnership working, as set out above, we suggest that each district needs to be able to grow its own approach to partnership without being constrained by a city wide approach that may not meet local needs. Friendship Care and Housing suggested another barrier:

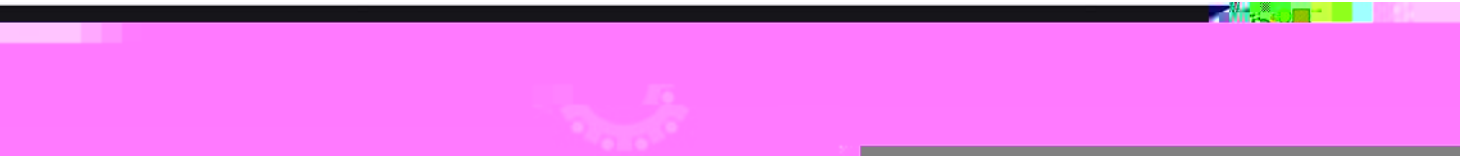
“Partners that stay involved out of habit or because they feel they ought to but have no clear purpose for attending will reduce the effectiveness of partnership working.”

3.10.9 This would suggest that a key issue for districts is to have the right people at the table at the right time and that representation co-option or engagement should not be about the organisation you represent or respective status but the difference the contribution can make to the delivery of real and measurable outcomes for citizens.

3.10.10 The key opportunity identified by members of Birmingham Council for Voluntary Services (BVSC) was that the devolution agenda could and should provide a platform for locally-based cross-sector discussions and debates about which local issues are a priority, and how best they should be addressed. In particular, councillors feel strongly that the voluntary and community sector should be engaged in the commissioning process at the earliest possible stage so that services can be truly co-designed (not just with voluntary groups, but with service users).

3.10.11 Conflict is frequently an unintended outcome of partnership working and it was suggested that we have to be more creative about using this for good and developing ways to embrace it not avoid it. When engaging the third sector on, for example, discussions about funding cuts they need to be able to see how their input has made a difference and so ensuring feedback is part of the process is important.





	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
<b>R16</b>	<p>Executive Members for Local Services supported by the Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion and Equalities to:</p> <p>a) Develop opportunities for citizens to shape service delivery:</p> <p>Work with ward committees, Local Services Directorate and the corporate centre to develop citizen engagement opportunities, making the best use of existing networks (including natural community hubs e.g. school gates, local markets and places of worship), the City Council's own website and other websites and social media (within available resources) and encourage the development of improvement plans where necessary and ensure engagement outcomes feed into annual district governance reviews.</p> <p>b) Develop Partnership engagement as part of delivering "different for less":</p>		



## 4 Principles and Processes Going Forward

### 4.1 Functionality of Place

- 4.1.1 A collective understanding of the distinctiveness and purpose of place needs to be developed at a range of spatial scales (neighbourhoods, wards, districts).
- 4.1.2 The articulation of distinctiveness and identification of the positive drivers for change within localities can be confused with arguments around deprivation, with some commentators suggesting that areas within the city have often vied for the place of the most deprived and the resources that come with that. Have we done enough to identify social and institutional assets within communities to identify opportunities? The asset approach values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community. In an asset approach, the glass is half-full rather than half-empty.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.1.3 Buildings and land enable or hinder localities from meeting local needs. The physical assets located within districts can be key drivers for change and positive engagement with citizens and stakeholders – and they must be able to influence decisions and benefit from them. However, it is also recognised that much in the district portfolio is not in the best condition and falls short of like for like within the market or modern day requirement. It is acknowledged that libraries, swimming pools, parks, adult education centres are fixed and based on historical decisions and are in effect a “corporate” as well as a “community” asset. Strategic consideration and decisions over such assets needs to be a shared process and that gives power and influence to communities. A key test of devolution and our willingness to let go will be our capacity to entrust communities, constructively engaging and not just consulting over change.

	Recommendation	Responsibility	Completion Date
R17	<p>In order to ensure that assets are used effectively for the benefit of citizens the Deputy Leader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the districts to build on the asset plans previously developed for constituencies at ward and district levels (those both locally and centrally held);</li> <li>• Agree a joint protocol between the local and central executive regarding governance, management, disposal, and the future use of all assets that fall within the sphere of responsibility of a locality to enshrine the influence of districts; and</li> <li>• Agree a mechanism for reconciling different views.</li> </ul>	Deputy Leader	Jan 2014

<sup>9</sup> I&Dea (2010) *A Glass Half-full: How an asset approach can improve community health and well being*. At: [www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498](http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498)





# Devolution: Making it Real

to residents formally and informally. Sounding out citizens at a particular point in time may not provide the intelligence and understanding now required. Consultation, therefore, needs to be part of an ongoing discussion with citizens about needs, priorities and quality of place and services.

4.3.4 We used placemats to capture ideas during sessions. One of the members of the Committee said that for them the purpose of devolution :

“is to empower people by engaging them, working in partnership and listening








- 4.3.16 There is a diverse pattern of community, voluntary and interest groups across the city and they are important community anchors. Councillors generally have experience of engaging with a wide range of such groups. Given the diversity of provision across the city and the intent of devolution to grow difference, it is not sensible to lay out the organisations with which districts or wards are required to work with, rather they should “work with the grain” and the organisations and capacity that already exists. Officers and councillors need to understand where linkages can be made which will require ongoing mapping.
- 4.3.17 Whilst some community and voluntary organisations spring up themselves and function with little external support there is a need for skilled support to bring communities together and enable capacity building. The future operating model for community development workers has been challenging and the aspiration from Resourcing Devolution of a community development worker in each district may not be achievable. With a whole system whole place approach we need to look at resources overall, including tenant participation officers and ward support officers – see if any capacity for developing and supporting groups.

## Communications

- 4.3.18 Without good communication with the public devolution will struggle. One concern we have relates to the Council website. It looks no different overall to how it did in April 2012. In addition the district web pages, having to work with the vagaries of the fatwire system are unwieldy. If you put ‘devolution’ onto the search engine you get nothing setting out the transformation; the top three relate to scrutiny reports of 2004, 2006 and 2012! But ‘districts’ does lead to a page with key information.
- 4.3.19 The web site should enable residents to find the services they need and also understand who is accountable for them. If an agreed aim of devolution relates to accountability and engagement on those grounds the web site currently is not fit for purpose.
- 4.3.20 Social media should also be developed further and Selly Oak and Hodge Hill, for example, have an active twitter accounts.

## 4.4 Next Steps for the Committee

- 4.4.1 The intention was never to solve all the challenges of devolution with this report, but to clarify the overarching direction of the Council’s policy and confirm the intended citizen benefit through ‘making it real’. We also aimed to focus attention on some areas of concern and make recommendations for the executive, districts and wards. It was also intended to develop the Committee’s work programme in the light of the inquiry.
- 4.4.2 Some areas of work are still required:
- To complete the work of the housing working group; and

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- To work with Corporate Finance, Local Services Directorate officers and Executive Members for Local Services to examine delegated budgets to ensure budgets now being delegated are fit for purpose.

4.4.3 The Committee is keen to provide support to districts and wards as well as having its scrutiny role. We would welcome discussion with the Executive Members for Local Services as to how they influence the Committee's work programme and how the Committee could support the



## Appendix 1: Evidence

Name	Organisation	Witness	Written Evidence
Sir Albert Bore, Leader	Birmingham City Council	Y	-
Steve Ashton	New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council	Y	N
Mark Barrow	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Steve Bentley	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Haydn Brown	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Prof John Bryson	University of Birmingham	Y	Y
Brian Carr	BVSC	N	Y
Bev Carroll	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Gemma Cartwright	Rover Community Action Trust	Y	N
Guy Chaundy	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Karen Cheney	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Tony Clabby	The Digbeth Trust	Y	N
Ness Cole	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jan Collymore	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Cllr John Cotton, Cabinet Member for Social Cohesion & Equalities	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jim Crawshaw	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Karen Creavin	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Paul Dransfield	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Mike Davis	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Elaine Elkington	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Tony Fox	Cannon Hill Park Friends	Y	Y
Sharon Freedman	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Ellie Gabbay	Resident	Y	N
Page Getfield	Tenant Representative	Y	N
Joan Goodwin	Chair, City HLB	Y	N
Phil Grainger	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Catherine Griffiths	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Cllr Gareth Griffiths	New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council		

Name	Organisation	Witness	Written Evidence
CLr Tony Kennedy	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Sue Knottenbelt	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Rob James	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Ifor Jones	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Chris Jordan	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Sukvinder Kalsi	Birmingham City Council	Y	Y
Angus Kennedy	Community Regeneration	Y	Y
Jacqui Kennedy	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Jan Kimber	Birmingham City Council	Y	N
Sharon Lea	Y		